

Ladies and gentlemen,

My husband and I are very honoured by the invitation of the Asahi Shimbun to come here and tell you something about Anne Frank. We hope that in this way you may become more acquainted with her who we loved so much and still love. We are convinced that her father who, due to his health could unfortunately not be here personally, is with us in his mind.

No doubt, you all know Anne already from what she wrote. It must however be clear to you that such an intelligent girl who during twenty-five months lived isolated from the world outside and was surrounded mainly by adults who all had their own problems, could not really express herself to them, not even to her parents. As her father declared later : her deepest thoughts, her inner-self were also for me a closed book.

As I experienced her in daily life she was always very friendly, smiling, always ready to help out with office-work, which she then did in the Secret Annexe. But her remarks were always keen and to the point, that really struck us. She was always very curious, asked for everything that went on outside. To give you an example, it was my task to go up to the Secret Annexe first thing in the morning to pick up the shopping-list, ask if anything in particular was needed, and bring news from the world outside. When I entered, nobody said anything and waited what I had to tell, except Anne who asked very cheerfully: Hello Miep, what's the news. This very much to her mother's embarrassment, ~~as the Frank's and the van Daan's disagreed~~ on the children's education, ^{as} and the van Daan's often complained ^{and said} that Anne and Margot were brought up too freely. Mr. Frank sometimes told me about these problems, he had to tell someone, and he knew I would not tell anyone about it.

The duration of my morning-visit to the Secret Annexe was never long, twenty minutes at most, as the people who worked in the warehouse could ask for me. It was also possible that I was needed on the phone, then I had to be present. After receiving the shopping-list and the other wishes of the people in hiding I quickly went to the greengrocer who was close to the office. There I bought as much vegetables as I could get. The greengrocer who asked nothing but probably understood (as was indeed established after the war) kept more and more vegetables for me. I also asked him to deliver the potatoes, ^{which} ~~who~~ were too heavy for me, at the office in lunchtime, when the warehouse people were having their lunch. I then quickly brought the potatoes to the office kitchen and hid them in a cupboard. In the evening

when the warehouse people had left, Peter went down to pick them up. I took the vegetables up myself between my office-work. During lunchtime Elly went up and very quietly had lunch with the people in hiding. My husband also went up to chat with them and tell the latest news. J

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The people in hiding went through many moments of fear and tension. They had to think with everything they did, with every step they made, can we do it, what are the risks involved.

The burglaries in the warehouse downstairs and in the office caused a lot of unrest, as Anne described in her Diary. Mr. Koophuis had the keys of the whole house and he was warned by the nightwatchman the next morning when again there had been a burglary and he had found the door open or destroyed. The people in hiding were unable to do anything as nobody was to know that they were there. Unfortunately, when the last burglary occurred Mr. Koophuis was in bed with gastric hemorrhage. So my husband and I went to the house to repair the broken front door provisionally, so nobody could enter, as that day was a national holiday and nobody of the staff would come. I will never forget the condition in which we found people in the Secret Annexe. They were all laying on the floor, close to each other, they didn't dare to walk or go to the toilet as they did not know if there was still anybody, perhaps even police, in the Front house after the burglary. J

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Anne wrote on June 20, 1942 : "It is an odd idea for someone like me to keep a Diary, not only because I have never done so before, but because it seems that neither I - nor for that matter anyone else - will be interested in the unbosomings of a thirteen-year old schoolgirl". How different did things turn out. Her young life found a tragic end in a German concentration camp. Her Diary however found its way to the whole world with undiminishing interest. J

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You will agree with me that Anne's searching mind, her keenness of observation, and her ability to describe all the ups and downs and the peculiarities of the people in hiding showed her talent for writing. It must have been with all the passion of her young personality that she confided all events to her diary-friend Kitty.

It is clear that in this vivid, intelligent and sensitive child, living under such abnormal conditions, the transformation from girl to woman from child to young adult, took place with accelerated speed, but she

W. ... 1600 hours

still kept something of a child in her appearance of course. J

8 You may perhaps wonder if Elly and I, the office girls, knew that Anne kept a Diary. Yes, we knew she did. Once, when I entered the room of the Franks on an unusual time, I disturbed her during writing. She did not look particularly friendly and I hurried out of the room. J

9 Now I would like to tell you something about how Anne's Diary was found. In the afternoon of that disastrous day, August 4, 1944, when my husband was back at the office and also Elly had pulled herself together to return, we decided to go back to the Secret Annexe after closing time. The German police had closed the door but not sealed it and I had a spare key. The oldest warehouse-clerk was taken into confidence, the youngest one was sent home and the front door closed. Then we all went up, frightened, into the Secret Annexe. ¹⁰ I can not exactly explain what moved me, Elly or my husband, to do this, was it only curiosity? No, certainly not. It was perhaps a need that we felt to actually see for ourselves that the people that we loved so much were indeed gone, or to see if we could save anything that might be important. We walked through the rooms as quick as possible, and we soon found out that everything that had any value was taken away. What was left, books, papers, photographs and so was scattered on the floor. There we found Anne's Diary, the first one, which she had received for her birthday on June 12, 1942, as well as her other Diary papers, and a lot of loose pages. We didn't dare to stay any longer in the Secret Annexe, and after I took Anne's toilet cape and a linen shoebag with me as well, we went back to the office downstairs in the Fronthouse. ¹¹ We told the warehouseclerk to be present when the furniture was taken away and to collect all the loose pages, and hand them over to me, which he did. I kept everything in my desk, and didn't read it. When Otto Frank came back from the concentration camp end may 1945, I did not immediately hand over Anne's papers to him, they belonged to Anne and it was still possible that she had survived and was still alive. Only when it was certain that she had died I gave him his daughter's heritage. J

12 Reading and rereading her Diary one must be impressed by the incredible sense of responsibility with which this young woman described her life and that of others during the time they were in hiding. With her writing she kept an open window to the world outside, as she wrote on February 23, 1944, describing the view from the window of the Secret Annexe's attic: "As long as this exists, and I may live to see it, this sunshine, the cloudless skies, while this lasts, I cannot be unhappy". I hope you will permit me to end with these words of Anne. ~~_____~~

~~_____~~ Thank you.